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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 AMMAN 005232

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/28/2015

TAGS: PHUM PREL KWMN KCRM JO

SUBJECT: JORDAN'S FAMILY PROTECTION DEPARTMENT A WORK IN PROGRESS, PATIENCE

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

Summary

1. (U) Jordan's Family Protection Department (FPD) is making headway in providing quality care abuse victims. The FPD has the backing of Queen Rania and the support of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). A major project for the FPD, a shelter to house adult women abuse victims, is still not open, and neither the FPD nor the MSD can offer a definite timetable for its launch. Despite the challenges it faces from traditional society, the FPD is working to increase awareness of domestic abuse and to ease the burden of its victims. End Summary.

FPD AND ITS PROCEDURES

2. (U) The FPD, a branch of the Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD), officially opened in 1998. Receiving support from the U.S., the United Kingdom, and UNICEF, among other donors, the FPD handles cases of verbal, physical, and sexual abuse against women and children. In cooperation with the MSD, the FPD provides limited counseling and family monitoring. With its own forensic doctor and examination facilities, and an on-site jail, the FPD operates nearly autonomously. Unfortunately, the FPD is not yet able to provide full assistance to women victims of physical or sexual abuse. This responsibility still falls on other PSD units, due largely to the lack of an operating shelter for victims of abuse.

3. (SBU) The FPD headquarters is in burgeoning western Amman; aside from the security gate and the jail in the basement, it is a warm and inviting place, with smiling pictures of the Queen and children covering almost every wall. Despite the decor, serious work takes place here, led by Colonel Fadil Humoud. (Comment: Poloff found Humoud to be entirely committed to his work and passionate about outreach/public awareness to curb the social stigma associated with reporting abuse. End Comment.) The FPD originally only operated in Amman, but has opened offices in six other locations throughout the country.

4. (U) Cases are brought to the FPD through a variety of means. Many cases of abused children occur in divorced homes, and often the non-abusing parent will levy a complaint with the FPD. Occasionally children (for purposes of the FPD, a child is under 16) will come to the FPD on their own to make a complaint. If a complaint of child abuse is brought to a regular PSD unit, that unit is required to refer the case to the FPD. When a case comes to the FPD, the victim is interviewed and a forensic examination is conducted, if necessary, on site in a secure and confidential space. The FPD is cognizant of the pressure associated with giving testimony, so it implemented video-interviewing in 2002. This keeps the victim from having to retell the abuse several times to different parties. In cases where a minor victim would need to testify at trial, the courts would employ a recently implemented CCTV system, precluding the need for a child to testify in front of a full court audience.

5. (U) All female victims and most child victims are interviewed by a female police officer, and the interviews are taped by two cameras onto the same frame--one showing the entire interview space, and one that can scan the room and zoom in on the participants--to ensure the integrity of the process. The interview is recorded on two tapes; one is kept in a controlled-access environment at the FPD, and the other is sent to the courts for secure storage. The offender's legal counsel is allowed access to view the court's copy, but cannot take possession of, or make changes to the tape. The forensic examination is also conducted discreetly. The MSD provides clothing in cases where the victim's clothing needs to be taken as evidence or for further examination. When possible, the forensic doctor will also examine the accused offender. However, as Humoud explained, neither the FPD nor the courts can compel the offender to acquiesce to an exam or to submit a DNA sample. The examination rooms are outfitted with modern equipment and sex-crime kits supplied by UNICEF.

6. (U) The FPD is staffed by 47 plain-clothes investigators

spread among the various regional offices, 18 in Amman alone. There is also a support staff of 70, including technicians, doctors, and social workers--part of the cooperation between FPD and MSD. Ahmad Muhaissen heads the MSD presence in the Amman FPD headquarters. The FPD is charged with determining whether enough evidence exists to bring a criminal case to court. In some instances, the offender or the entire family undergoes counseling on how to avoid abuse. The MSD conducts this counseling and meets regularly with the family to monitor the situation. Repeat offenses and abuse of a severe nature almost always result in court cases, according to Humoud. Sexually based abuse also always results in a criminal case.

WOMEN'S SHELTER OPENING DELAYED REPEATEDLY

17. (C) In April 2001, the MSD reported that the "long-promised safe haven" for abused women would open within the next three months. In September of 2002, the MSD said that this "state-of-the-art project" would be completed within six months. As of June 2005, the new estimate is September, but no one is willing to go on record with a specific date. The idea for the shelter, according to English language daily The Jordan Times, was born in 1997, but ministerial changes and funding problems caused the project to be shelved repeatedly. Currently, the physical work on the shelter is nearly complete, and it could, in theory, open and accommodate up to 30 women. However the shelter is still not operational. The impression that Humoud gave was that the shelter is itself a victim. There is so much social baggage surrounding the issue of abuse--that it is a private, family matter; that sex and sexual assault are taboo subjects; that victims of sexual abuse have dishonored the family--that the idea of the shelter had a hard time getting off the ground, and still faces many logistical challenges.

18. (C) Humoud and Muhaissen, who as the MSD liaison is largely responsible for getting the shelter ready to open, say that it is unclear how the shelter will operate. Still to be determined are issues such as who will staff the shelter, who will be allowed to use it, and under what circumstances and for what duration will victims be allowed to stay. What is certain is that the shelter will not accept women charged with prostitution and/or adultery, even if they are legitimate victims of abuse. Humoud acknowledges that women still face discrimination in Jordan. He laments that there are segments of society that remain outside the reach of his assistance, but at the same time he holds Jordan's traditional society in high regard. Humoud is also concerned with what will happen to the shelter's inhabitants, as the women who use it will inevitably be stigmatized for their "participation" in the abuse, even as victims.

19. (SBU) With the abuse shelter still unopened, the cases of adult female abuse victims are not fully handled by Humoud's specially trained staff, nor do they have access to the MSD social workers. After the initial complaints and interviews are made to the FPD, these cases are referred to outside PSD criminal units, which are neither prepared nor capable of professionally handling the victims or prosecuting the offenders, in Humoud's view.

110. (U) The shelter is one of several endeavors of the Family Protection Project (FPP) under the patronage of Queen Rania, as part of a Jordanian-UK technical assistance agreement to combat violence against women and children. Jordan recently called for the continued support of international donors for the FPP. Its current funding from the British Department for International Development (DFID), ends this month. In a meeting last week of the Family Protection Task Force, the Queen presented a three-year strategic action plan for the FPP. The Queen outlined the need to design a human-based framework to develop the capabilities of the individuals working in the field, according The Jordan Times. Built into the three-year plan are six components: prevention, protection, legislation and policies, research and studies, networking and cooperation, and monitoring and evaluation. Chief among these was a call for the development of a National Framework for Family Protection to deal with violence in the family by "advocating for cooperation and coordination between the relevant service providers."

COMMENT

111. (U) Potential opportunities exist for USG assistance for the FPD. Already several FPD officers, including Humoud have had training in the U.S., though most of the FPD's training has been provided by the DFID. Humoud is eager for more training, specifically with regard to crime scene processing techniques. Assistance from the U.S. could also take the form of capacity-building within the FPP. End Comment.

HALE